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Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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This issue of *EAP* begins our 19th year. We thank readers renewing their subscriptions and include a reminder for “delinquents.”

The issue begins with architect Julio Bermudez’s report on *Architecture Alive*, a research project exploring “extraordinary architectural experiences.” To gather descriptions of these experiences, Bermudez has set up an on-line survey. He requests that *EAP* readers and other interested individuals participate in this survey, the web address of which is provided in the project’s overview on p. 4.

Our three feature articles this issue focus on the theme of place. Geographer Edward Relph reviews philosopher Jeff Malpas’ *Heidegger’s Topology*, a study of the significance of place in Heidegger’s philosophy. In turn, Malpas responds to Relph’s review. Last, educator John Cameron describes his deepening involvement with place as he and his partner restore a homestead on Bruny Island, just off the southeastern coast of Australia’s Tasmania.

Festschrift for Karsten Harries

The work of philosopher **Karsten Harries** plays a pivotal role in phenomenological studies of architecture and place. The current issue of the German architectural e-journal, *Wolkenkuckucksheim*, is devoted to Harries and includes a digital version of his *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism*, originally published by Yale University Press in 1983. Contributors to the issue include: Hagi Kenaan (“The Ground’s Hidden Surface”); David Kolb (“Borders and Centers in the Age of Mobility”); David Leatherbarrow (“Architecture, Ecology, and Ethics”); James McQuillan (“Karsten Harries: Beyond Care—An Architecture of Love”); Juhani Pallasmaa (“The Space of Time: Mental Time in Architecture”); and David Seamon & Enku Mulugeta Assefa (“Karsten Harries’ Natural Sym-

bols as a Means for Interpreting Architecture”). The issue is available at:

www.tu-cottbus.de/theo/Wolke/eng/Subjects/subject.html#A1

Below: sketches by Chinese artist and cartoonist Feng Zikai (1898-1975) of Shanghai’s alley life; clockwise from top left: Lowering a basket to purchase goods from a hawker; a *hun-tun* seller with his mobile kitchen on a shoulder pole; a peddler selling straw mats; a street barber cleaning his customer’s ears. These drawings appear in Chunlan Zhao’s “From *Shikumen* to New-style: A Re-reading of *Lilong* Housing in Modern Shanghai,” a chapter in J. Madge & A. Peckham’s *Narrative Architecture*—see p. 3. “*Lilong*” can roughly be translated as “alley-living,” whereby the narrow streets and alleys of Shanghai’s dense urban neighborhoods became “a shared living room and multifunctional space, through which a particular local dwelling culture was created” (p. 453).



Donors, 2008

We are grateful to the following readers who have contributed more than the base subscription for 2008. As always, we could not continue without your generous support, and we thank you all!

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Conference Presenters Needed!

There are two upcoming conferences that *EAP* readers might wish to attend and contribute paper presentations to. The 27th **International Human Sciences Research Conference** will be held 11-14 June 2008, at Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey, near New York City. Because of its small size, this conference is always a great pleasure intellectually and communally. *EAP* editor David Seamon is organizing a special session on Goethean science and would be happy to help with other “environmental” sessions that *EAP* readers might want to organize. If so, please let him know by February 1. Abstract due date is 15 April. Additional information: <http://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/psychology/ihsr.asp>; or: <http://phobos.ramapo.edu/~hsr08ram/>.

Another upcoming conference to which *EAP* readers might wish to contribute is the 2008 meeting of the **International Association for Environmental Philosophy** (IAEP), to be held in Pittsburgh, 19-20 October, immediately following the annual meetings of **SPEP** (Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy) and **SPHS** (Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences), 16-18 October. The double session sponsored by *EAP* at the recent IAEP November Chicago meeting was well attended, and the five presentations were varied and

interesting. Seamon would like to organize another *EAP* session at the Pittsburgh meetings, and readers interested in participating should contact him as soon as possible, certainly by February 1. Conference information is at:

www.environmentalphilosophy.org

Items of Interest

The conference, **Thinking through Nature: Philosophy for an Endangered World**, will be held 19-22 June 2008, at the University of Oregon in Eugene. The conference is sponsored by the International Association of Environmental Philosophy (IAEP). Key themes include: Environmental ethics; aesthetics of natural and built environments; environmental restoration; architecture, place, and dwelling; traditional ecological knowledge; eco-criticism; ecophenomenology; and environmental metaphysics and theology. Keynote speakers include **Gary Paul Nabhan**, Director, Center for Sustainable Environments, Northern Arizona University; and **Alberto Pérez-Gómez**, Architecture Program, McGill University. For further information, contact **Ted Toadvine**, Philosophy & Environmental Studies, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1295; Toadvine@uoregon.edu

The **International Association for the Study of Environment, Space, and Place** will hold its 4th annual conference, 25-27 April 2008, at Towson University in Towson, Maryland. The conference theme is *tourism*. Abstracts for paper sessions are due February 10. Contact: Troy Paddock at: paddockt1@southernct.edu.

The *Journal of Architectural Education* will publish a thematic issue on “**Immateriality in Architecture**” in late 2008. The prospectus reads in part: “Can today’s representational media emulate the ineffable? How can we distinguish between the numinous and the merely luminous? Will new developments in the sciences, psychology, and philosophy bring new insights to the question of the immaterial in our increasingly material culture? The editors seek critical responses to the difficult task of working materially with artifacts and places that are also tangibly immaterial.” For readers interested in

submitting manuscripts, contact the issue's editors: Thomas Barrie at: tom_barrie@ncsu.edu; Julio Bermudez at: bermudez@arch.utah.edu.

Interdisciplinary Design and Research is a new peer-reviewed e-journal on interdisciplinary design sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Design Institute at Washington State University, Spokane. Volumes 1 and 2 consider "Design and Health" and "Design and Livability," respectively. The editors welcome research articles and design projects addressing any facet of interdisciplinary design relating to any dimension of life experience. For more information, go to: www.idrp.wsu.edu/index.html.

Phenomenology & Practice is a new human science e-journal dedicated to the study of the lived experience of a broad range of human practices—for example, pedagogy, design, counseling, psychology, social work, and health science. Increasingly, researchers and practitioners are adapting interpretive methodologies to address questions related to practice, and *Phenomenology & Practice* serves as a forum for this work. For further information: <http://www.phandpr.org/index.php/pandp/index>.

Patterns in Applied Phenomenology (PAPH) is a new book series devoted to works in which phenomenological methods, concepts, and research are used to address concrete practical problems, or phenomenological insights are used to develop "phenomenologically-informed practices." Further information at: paph@zetabooks.com.

Citations Received

Vincent B. Canizaro, ed., 2007. *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition*. NY: Princeton Architectural Press.

This collection is said to bring "together over 40 key references, illustrating the full range of ideas embodied by the term *architectural regionalism*. Authored by leading critics, historians, and architects, the collection represents the history of regionalist thinking in architecture from the early 20th century to today." Includes some region-focused patterns from Christopher Alexander's *Pattern Language* and Juhani Pallasmaa's "Tradition and Modernity: The Feasibility of Regional Architecture in Post-Modern Society" but, strangely, provides nothing by Edward Relph, Robert Mugerauer, or other phenome-

nologically-inspired writers. A wide-ranging hodgepodge with no clear conceptual focus.

David A. Gruenewald & Gregory A. Smith, eds., 2007. *Place-Based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

The 15 chapters of this volume focus on the theory and practice of place-based education and highlight three themes: understanding place-based pedagogy as part of a broader social movement known as the "new localism," which "aims toward reclaiming the significance of the local in the global age"; making links between ecological awareness and concerns about equity and cultural diversity; presenting examples of place-based learning in action. Includes *EAP* contributor John Cameron's "Learning Country: A Case Study of Australian Place-Responsive Education."

Nigel Hoffmann, 2007. *Goethe's Science of Living Form*. Harlemville, NY: Adonis Press.

"...a disciplined search of Goethe's methodological writing as well as of other sources of phenomenological thinking [to develop] a method for a systematic practice of landscape study." The real-world focus is Yabby Ponds, an Australian locale.

Elizabeth A. Johnson & Michael W. Klemens, eds., 2005. *Nature in Fragments: The Legacy of Sprawl*. NY: Columbia Univ. Press.

Contributors focus on "the impact of sprawl on biodiversity and the measures that can be taken to alleviate it."

James Made & Andrew Peckham, eds. *Narrative Architecture: A Retrospective Anthology*. NY: Routledge, 2006.

This collection assembles articles from the *Journal of Architecture* that are said to "stand out after ten years of publication." Themes include: architects' design practice; issues of materiality; narratives of domesticity; the sociology of architectural practice; and identity and appropriation of place. Note the drawing on p. 1 of this *EAP* is from this collection.

Roger Paden, 2007. *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meanings of the Palais Storborough*. NY: Lexington Books.

This philosopher studies "philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Viennese house that he helped design and build for his sister shortly after he abandoned philosophy for more practical activities." Paden argues that the house "belongs to neither architectural Modernism nor Postmodernism, but is instead caught between the two movements." The first volume in Robert Mugerauer's "toposophia" series (See *EAP*, 17, 2: 2-3).

Architecture Live

Julio Bermudez

A*rchitecture Live* is a research project focusing on “extraordinary architectural experiences.” The emphasis is transformative phenomenologies of architectural *delight*, a phenomenon that by its very nature is largely intangible, qualitative, experiential—even esoteric. What is architectural delight? How does it take place? Why and when does it happen? What is it like as an experience?

Architecture Live proposes that realizing the nature of delight needs to go no further than our own live experience of architecture and may be greatly facilitated by studying the most dramatic cases available—namely, extraordinary architectural experiences.

Specifically, the goals of *Architecture Live* are:

- To develop appreciation for the profoundly qualitative in architecture;
- To improve understanding of both the ordinary and the extraordinary in architectural phenomenology;
- To assist in making environments that foster strong aesthetic experiences.

Architectural Live pursues these goals by:

1. Studying non-dual aesthetic events. Trustworthy testimonies of extraordinary architectural experiences consistently describe situations involving no separation between subject and object. These experiences can be felt as unifying, intimate, and even transcendental identifications of self and other.
2. Developing a thorough phenomenological account of architecture that coordinates what philosopher Ken Wilber (*Integral Psychology*, 2000) has termed “first-, second-, and third-person experiences.” Archi-

ecture is ordinarily experienced in third-person—i.e., as an “it” fundamentally different from “me” and perceptually, emotionally, and intellectually detached from “me.” Traditional phenomenological methods enable us to move from such a limiting and instrumentalist view of architecture (as an “it”) to one of materialized intentionality that actively interacts in a meaningful experiential conversation—a “you” and thus second person. There is also the possibility of a total identification of self and other (i.e., the building)—an event in which subject and object are merged into one (I = you = it).

3. Examining the role of the built environment as a potential gateway to transcendental insights.

As part of this work, I would like to ask *EAP* readers to complete a web-based survey on extraordinary architectural experiences. My aim is to collect a substantial number of qualitative descriptions to support and challenge my research. My interest is in the actual experience (or its absence). Completing the survey should take no longer than 10 minutes. Privacy of participants is guaranteed, and results from the study will be made available to all participants. The survey is available at:

<http://studentvoice.com/utah/ExtraordinaryArchitecture>

This research is described in greater detail at: <http://faculty.arch.utah.edu/alive/>. For questions or information, contact Dr. Julio Bermudez, University of Utah College of Architecture + Planning, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112; bermudez@arch.utah.edu.



Disclosing the Ontological Depth of Place: *Heidegger's Topology* by Jeff Malpas

Edward Relph

Relph is a geographer who teaches in the Division of Social Sciences at Scarborough College, the University of Toronto. His writings have been instrumental in demonstrating the value of a phenomenological approach for environmental and architectural concerns. His books include *Place and Placelessness* (1976), one of the earliest and most accessible phenomenologies of place; *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (1981), a powerful explication of the Heideggerian notion of *appropriation* as a potential vehicle for a lived environmental ethic grounded in respect and care for the Other—what Relph calls “environmental humility”; and *The Modern Urban Landscape* (1987), an exploration of why cities of our time look the way they do. relph@scar.utoronto.ca. © 2008 Edward Relph.

A few years ago in the Tate Modern Gallery in London, there was an installation of the reconstruction of an explosion of an ordinary garden shed. The room was filled with fragments of wood, tools, equipment and gardening stuff, some recognizable, others not—suspended from the ceiling to recreate a three-dimensional, frozen moment of the explosion that visitors could walk through. Something ordinary and everyday, all in pieces, disconnected except by point of origin.

I recently began a comprehensive review of what has been written about place in the last 20 years and it was like walking into the aftermath of an academic explosion. What had once been a reasonably coherent body of thought, grounded in phenomenology and mostly the concern of humanistic geographers and environmental psychologists, seems to have flown off in all directions.

For example, Doreen Massey flatly rejects the idea of places as sites of nostalgia and proposes instead that they are nodes in networks of social relations. Altman and Low define place as settings to which individuals are emotionally and culturally attached. For David Harvey “[p]lace, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct.” GIS scientist Pragya Agarwal claims that “[p]laces are proximal spaces,” while artist Lucy Lippard writes that “[p]lace for me is the locus of desire.” Neuroscientist John Zeisel uses MRI to locate where in the brain our sense of place resides.

What I think has happened is that, because place is an everyday phenomenon with no precise definition, it can be bent to fit any methodological or disciplinary bias. For me, the only way to make some sense of this confusion is to get back to what preceded the big bang, to return to place as a phenomenon of experience and seek clarification there. For this, Jeff Malpas has become a valuable guide, including his most recent work, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

Over the last decade, Malpas and other philosophers—most notably Ed Casey, Ingrid Stefanovic and Robert Mugerauer—have established that place has been an important philosophical concept since the origins of Western philosophy, that it is best understood phenomenologically, and that Heidegger's writings are crucial in this understanding.

In *Heidegger's Topology*, Malpas takes this interest in place one step further by arguing that Heidegger's thought is not just helpful in elucidating place, but that place is *at the root of* Heidegger's philosophy of being. Being and place are inextricably bound together in that being emerges only through place; and place, through being.

Though *Heidegger's Topology* will no doubt be contested by some Heidegger scholars, I find the work original and immediately compelling. Now that Malpas has brought the point to light, it is clear to me that the idea of place is indeed power-

fully latent in all phases of Heidegger's writing. It is manifest in the language of *Dasein* ("a 'da', a there, a topos," p. 14) and in the metaphors of "clearing," "way," "dwelling," and "homecoming" that comprise what Malpas calls Heidegger's "topology," a word Malpas uses not in its mathematical sense but in the sense of "a saying of place"—an attempt to illuminate the place in which we always and already find ourselves (p. 33).

This effort, Malpas suggests, is not unlike the work of a traditional topographer attempting to inscribe a place from within through survey, triangulation, and traverse. Topology is thus a variant of phenomenology, which Heidegger described in 1919 as "the investigation of life itself."

For non-philosophers or readers not reasonably familiar with Heidegger's philosophy or obscure language, this will not be an easy book. Heidegger's thought deals with what is near to us—with being, existence and the everyday, immediate encounter with a world that is already differentiated and connected, a world that is obvious but so rich and complex it is extremely difficult to write about.

But whether you like Heidegger's writing or not, whether you find his contact with Nazism abhorrent or not, there is very little doubt among philosophers about the originality and depth of his thinking. Malpas covers the fifty-year span of Heidegger's writing and teaching, including many of his lectures available only in archives. The general approach is chronological, and about a third of the book discusses Heidegger's earlier thought, especially in *Being and Time*; another third is about the middle period of the 1930s and 1940s, including the matter of Heidegger's brief infatuation with National Socialism; and the last third is about Heidegger's later thought that embraced poetry, dwelling, and the questioning of technology.

It is this last phase that is most interesting for many architects and other non-philosophers reading Heidegger because it speaks most directly to the world we experience in the present age.

Malpas' aim is to establish that the foundation of Heidegger's philosophy is the recognition that, in finding ourselves in the world, we find ourselves already in place. Place is not just a bit of space or a function of affectivity and is certainly

more than a node in social networks. Place is neither something subjective and claimed by feelings, nor is it objective location. In fact, it precedes all notions of subjectivity and objectivity. It is a complex unity, integral to being, and encountered experientially as simultaneously unified, differentiated from yet connected with other places, and gathering together things, people, and our own lives.

Heidegger, of course, wrote and thought in German and used a number of words that can be translated into English as place—"Platz," "Stelle," "Gegend," "Stätte," "Ort," and "Ortschaft." Though they have different shades of meaning, these words can all be translated as "place" in English. "Platz" and "Stelle," which Heidegger used mostly in his earlier works, mean something like "position." "Ort" and "Ortschaft" (the latter literally translates as "placescape") he used mostly in his later writings, and the terms mean something like 'settled locality' with the sense of things belonging together.

Since in English the word "place" itself has a variety of meanings, such as location, setting, position, situation, social role, and context, there are many possibilities for slippage in translation. Heidegger's thought, however, seems to be an attempt to delve through and behind language to reflect upon what it is to experience being in the world.

Malpas argues that this originary experience of being is an experience of place: "The question of being is the question of how beings can emerge in their interrelatedness and their distinctiveness from one another" (p. 14). Beings and things in their concrete manifestations are always gathered together in a place; we experience them as simultaneously similar to and different from other things with which they are related, and we experience a particular place as simultaneously distinct from yet similar to and interrelated with other places.

At any given moment we see, hear, and touch a specific assemblage of chairs, windows, buildings, cars, people, plants, and so on; the world is always and inevitably encountered in its rich particularity, unity, and connectedness. For example, hearing as an everyday experience involves the sound of some specific thing, situation, or event—in *Being and Time*, Heidegger points to the examples of hearing a

motorcycle or the North wind and says that “[i]t requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise’.”

The idea of “world” is central to Heidegger’s thought. For him “is” did not mean everything that is but *Umwelt*—an envining world of self, others, and things that has a certain order and orientation. So a return to the things themselves, the watchword of phenomenology, means a return to the world itself—the one experienced prior to the onset of an artificial frame of mind. In this return, truth consists not of agreement about the state of things but of disclosure—letting beings be seen as they are in themselves. Malpas writes that because beings already exist in places, “the thinking of truth... also brings with it a thinking of place” (p. 192).

From *Heidegger’s Topology*

[Heideggerian topology is] essentially a meditative concern with the way in which a particular envining “world” comes forth around a particular mode of “emplacement” in that world. Heideggerian topology can thus be understood as an attempt to evoke and illuminate that placed abode. In this respect, topology is an attempt to illuminate a place in which we already find ourselves and in which other things are also disclosed to us (p. 34).

[T]he place ... in which philosophical questioning first arises is the place in which we first find ourselves—that place is not an abstract world of ideas, not a world of sense-data or “impressions,” not a world of theoretical “objects” nor of mere causal *relata*.

In finding ourselves “in” the world, we find ourselves already “in” a place, already given over to and involved with things, with persons, with our lives. On this basis the central questions of philosophy, questions of being and existence, as well as of ethics and virtue, must themselves take their determination and their starting point from this same place (p. 40).

While Malpas demonstrates that the topological aspects of Heidegger’s thinking can be traced in all phases of his writing, they are most explicit in the later works in which Heidegger became increasingly concerned with ideas of event, dwelling, and gathering. Malpas suggests that, for Heidegger, “event” and “place” often mean the same; they are both the starting point for thinking and both offer

possibilities for disclosure, appropriation, appearing, and gathering.

Place, therefore, loses any sense of located entities and comes to mean “that open, cleared yet bounded region in which we find ourselves gathered together with other persons and things, and in which we are opened up to the world and the world to us” (p. 221). A place is where being happens—an event that is continually changing and open to question.

The idea of dwelling that is so prominent in Heidegger’s later writings is clearly topological. Dwelling embraces a number of meanings, including cherishing, protecting, caring for, and looking after. To build involves a productive relationship to *one place*, but to dwell means to be in a certain relation to *place*. Dwelling involves an ontological sense of place that illuminates and is illuminated by the place-specific processes of building, yet also includes a grasp of mortality and the aspects of the world that go beyond human being.

The latter are referred to figuratively by Heidegger as the earth, the sky, and the gods—terms open to wide interpretation but which can respectively be taken to mean non-human nature, openness, and the ineffable. It is through these aspects of world that human beings are able “to grasp their own being as implicated in being that goes beyond a human life” (p. 275). Dwelling might therefore be described as an enlightened understanding of being-in-place. In turn, building that is informed by dwelling will tread lightly and be responsive to the context of a specific place.

Dwelling stands in opposition to what Heidegger called “the oblivion of being” in the modern world and which Malpas suggests is “perhaps the most important theme” in his later work (p. 279). A consequence of the framework of rationalistic technology is a forgetfulness of being in which instrumental notions of efficiency, measurement, and reserves of resources come to treat the world as an object and a source of raw materials.

Similarly, new technologies of communication shrink distances. “Yet,” Heidegger wrote, “the frantic abolition of all distance brings us no nearness. Short distance is not nearness. Nor is great distance remoteness.” Place is reduced to spatial position and being is forgotten.

While I find this later part of Heidegger's work appealing because it reinforces my own doubts about modern placelessness, I also think it is his most superficial thinking. It is almost as though Heidegger looked up, noticed that the world he lived in didn't have much resemblance to the one he was thinking about, didn't like it much and felt obliged to comment.

He seems to have shifted from rigorous phenomenological description to a selective historical judgment that implies that the quality of dwelling in classical Greece, as manifest in a few archeological sites, was somehow better than that manifest in power stations along the Rhine in the 1950s. I know of no way to distinguish between the quality of dwelling of, for example, a peasant living in a squalid hut on the fringes of the Black Forest in the 13th century and worried about surviving next winter, and that of a single mother living in social housing in South Chicago and worried about whether the food bank can get her family through next month.

Malpas mirrors Heidegger's critique of modern technology. He writes that one of its obvious consequences is a disruption of our sense of place, which he discusses in terms of loss of nearness, forgetfulness of being, and an inability to grasp limits to human activity. As a way to escape this disruption, he refers to Heidegger's idea of "composure toward technology"—in other words, a way of being that involves acceptance but not submission to technology. He suggests that achieving such composure depends on poetic dwelling that involves "a return to the openness and indeterminacy of the world and to the experience of wonder" (p. 310).

Given the forcefulness of his argument that place and being are inextricably linked, this conclusion seems insubstantial. But Heidegger seems to have been unable to suggest what to do next. His final essay was titled, "Only a god can save us"—a phrasing that was disingenuous and evasive. The essential point I take from Heidegger is not historical. The fact is that, in every age and in every individual and in every place, there are tendencies to "the oblivion of being," and it is always necessary to find appropriate ways of being, dwelling, and building that will challenge these tendencies.

Heidegger's works can be read not only as an account of the links between place and being but also as a sustained, albeit largely implicit, critique of rationalism. There are many indications that industrial technologies have changed the relationships between human beings and the world, and that this shift is related to the rise of rationalism in the last 400 years. Foucault and others have documented this rise and have pointed to indications that it has overstayed its welcome and begun to decline. Indeed, there is evidence of this decline in the very revival of interest in place as a phenomenon of experience (rather than as spatial location) that has occurred in the last 30 years and to which *Heidegger's Topology* is a substantial contribution.

I am predisposed toward place in all its "iridescent, multiple, shifting character" (p. 37) and, in *Heidegger's Topology* and his other work, Malpas discloses the ontological source for the fragments of the academic explosion of recent research on place and reset the grounds for future research. The result is a strong foundation for shifting the balance away from the rationalistic, calculative approach, in all its bureaucratic, corporate and climate-changing manifestations, to a view of the world that is responsible toward being and place.

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Disclosing the Depths of Heidegger's Topology: A Response to Relph

Jeff Malpas

Malpas is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania and author of *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topology* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). John Cameron and Ingrid Stefanovic provided reviews of this book in the spring 2004 *EAP*; Malpas, in turn, responded to those reviews in the fall 2004 issue (all available under “reviews” on the *EAP* webpage at www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/EAP.html). Malpas is coeditor of *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (2002) and two volumes of essays honoring Hubert L. Dreyfus: *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity*; and *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science* (2000). Jeff.Malpas@utas.edu.au. © 2008 Jeff Malpas.

In his review of my *Heidegger's Topology*, Edward Relph acknowledges the importance of Heidegger's thought in the contemporary turn to place within the humanities and social sciences, just as he acknowledges the importance of the philosophical inquiry into place as such. Relph is also particularly generous in his estimation of the role of my work, in *Heidegger's Topology* and elsewhere, in contributing to this renewed interest in place.

Moreover, Relph provides a strikingly apt and vivid image of the way the concept of “place” has, in recent years, “exploded” across many different areas and disciplines in a proliferation of different forms and uses. While there are many works that deploy various senses of place and that also delineate the detailed textures and forms of particular places, when it comes to the theoretical inquiry into place, the focus for the most part is not on place as such but either on the effects of place or on place itself as an effect of other processes.

Relph notes that David Harvey, for instance, treats place as a social construction, claiming that the only interesting question then concerns the social processes that give rise to place (Harvey 1996, pp. 293-94). Here, place is nothing more than an effect. Doreen Massey, on the other hand, treats place, which she refuses to distinguish from space, as significant largely in terms of the consequences of our imagination of place (Massey 2005, esp. pp. 5-8). Here, the effects of place are given priority.

Even the work of a theorist such as Henri Lefebvre (esp. Lefebvre 1991), so often cited as a key figure in the literature on place, turns out to be important, less for his elucidation of the concept than for the prioritization of space and place as acceptable terms within critical discourse (moreover, in Lefebvre, one finds much the same treatment of space and place as effects of social and economic factors as is evident in Harvey's own Lefebvrian-inflected writing). Much the same is true of other prominent theorists such as Foucault and even Deleuze and Guattari.

Part of Heidegger's importance is the central role his work played in enabling the appearance of place (and space) as a key theoretical concept in writers such as Lefebvre and Foucault (a point that Stuart Elden's work has done much to establish—see, for instance, Elden 2001). Furthermore, Heidegger is one of the few philosophers and the only major 20th-century thinker to thematize place as such and to provide an analysis of its structure and significance—so much so that the later Heidegger could refer to his own work as a “topology of being.” For anyone interested in the attempt to say more about place than is available in the work of thinkers like Harvey and Massey (or Lefebvre and Foucault), Heidegger must be essential reading.

Yet while Relph and I seem to be in agreement on the importance of Heidegger as a central figure in the thinking of place, we disagree in our

assessments of just what is most significant in Heidegger's treatment of place.

Focusing on the concept of dwelling that looms so large in Heidegger's later thinking, Relph observes that, while he finds this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy "appealing because it reinforces my own doubts about modern placelessness" (Relph 1976, 1981), he nevertheless views it as "the most superficial" aspect of Heidegger's thought. Relph takes the turn toward the concept of dwelling in later Heidegger as indicative of a shift from "rigorous phenomenological description to a selective historical judgment."

There is no doubt that there is a move away from a certain conception of phenomenology in Heidegger, although as I note toward the end of *Heidegger's Topology*, there is an important sense in which a form of "phenomenological seeing" remains central to all Heidegger's thinking (Malpas, 2006, pp. 307-8). I would, however, certainly dispute Relph's claim that what characterizes the later Heidegger is a shift to a "selective historical judgment," just as I would also take issue with Relph's judgment as to the superficiality of the Heideggerian account of dwelling.

It is important to note that the concept of dwelling is already present in *Being and Time*. In a brief and highly condensed passage in §12 (the main elements of which reappear in "Building Dwelling Thinking"), Heidegger distinguishes the way in which *Dasein* is "in" its world from the way in which a physical entity is "in" space (a sense of spatial-physical "containment" that allows one thing to be said to be "in" another as the water is "in" the glass or the glass is "in" the room). Heidegger refers to this first sense of "in" in terms of dwelling (see Heidegger, 1962, H54).

As deployed in *Being and Time*, the concept of dwelling remains obscure and problematic (Malpas 2006, pp. 74-83). In Heidegger's later thinking, however, it becomes one of the central ideas in his articulation of the enriched conception of place, one that includes both spatial and temporal elements to which human being is tied. In this respect, it is a mistake to see the notion of dwelling as tied to some pre-modern mode of life. Not only does this interpretation render the concept superficial but also

constitutes a highly partial reading of Heidegger's articulation.

What is at issue in Heidegger's talk of dwelling is not a comparison in the "quality of life" between different historical periods but, rather, the nature of human being as intimately tied to place. Dwelling is Heidegger's name for the topological mode of being that belongs to human being—not merely the human in some selected historical period but to the human "as such."

Precisely because humans *dwell*, the technological transformation of the world associated with modernity is such a challenge—an affront, even, to what it is to be human. The essential character of human life as dwelling is contradicted and obscured by the re-presentation of the human in terms of consumption, productivity, preference, and utility.

Moreover, just as Heidegger's critique of technology is directed at a pervasive tendency that underlies technology rather than being necessarily instantiated in any particular technological device, so too is Heidegger's account of dwelling intended as a description of a fundamental mode of being rather than something to be instantiated only in certain lives rather than others.

Although Relph rejects the Heideggerian concept of dwelling as "superficial," he is rather more sympathetic toward Heidegger's critique of technology that Relph reinterprets as a critique of "rationalism." I think that the use of the latter term here is ill-advised. While there is a certain calculative rationality that Heidegger views as problematic, it is a serious mistake, even if a widespread one, to treat Heidegger as an 'anti-rationalist' in any more general sense. There are, however, undoubtedly important points of convergence between Heidegger's account of modern technology and its essence (what Heidegger refers to as "*das Gestell*"—"the Framework") and accounts to be found in the work of other 20th-century thinkers, including Foucault's analysis of the rise of governmentality and the biopolitical; Weber's description of the processes of rationalisation and bureaucratization; and Adorno's account of instrumental rationality.

Such convergence is perhaps unsurprising given the prevalence of ideas concerning the problems and limits of technology in pre-war European

thinking. What makes Heidegger's account distinctive, however, is the way in which the critique of technology is tied to a topological analysis of which Heidegger's account of dwelling is an integral part. Nowhere is this more evident than in the essay, "The Thing"—itself part of the original lecture sequence from which "The Question Concerning Technology" also came—which begins with Heidegger's announcement of the phenomenon that has come to be known as "time-space compression" (Heidegger 1971, p. 163; Malpas 2006, pp. 278-79).

Relph assumes a connection between "rationalism" and the loss of place. Not only does he associate such "rationalism" with placelessness, but he also sees evidence of the decline of "rationalism" in the resurgence of interest in place. It remains unclear, however, how or why such a connection should obtain. If my account is correct, Heidegger provides an answer that works through the elucidation of place in relation to being and, in terms of dwelling, to human being. An answer is also pointed to through his analysis of the way in which technology operates in relation to place.

The fact that Relph seems not to have appreciated this aspect of Heidegger's topological thinking may indicate a deficiency in my presentation in *Heidegger's Topology*. It may well be the case that much more needs to be said to bring out the complexity and detail of Heidegger's later thought, though I suspect that part of the difficulty here is that any writing on the later Heidegger still stands under the shadow of the often partial and superficial readings that have dominated much of the literature to date and that pervade the broader appropriation of Heideggerian thinking.

Relph finds the Heideggerian response to the danger of technological modernity (at least as I articulate that response in *Heidegger's Topology*, in terms of the importance of ideas of openness, indeterminacy, wonder and, though not mentioned by Relph, questionability [Malpas 2006, pp. 302-03]) to be "insubstantial" and Heidegger's own comment in the *Der Spiegel* interview—"only a god can save us"—to be disingenuous and evasive.

I can sympathize with Relph's dissatisfaction here, but I think it misses the point concerning what is at issue. Once we analyse the operation of techno-

logical modernity topologically, we can see how it actually transforms our experience of place in ways that are at odds with the underlying character of place, and the underlying character even of that mode of being that belongs to technological modernity itself, but which it also conceals.

My emphasis on the importance of concepts like openness, indeterminacy, wonder, questionability, and associated modes of comportment is intended to direct attention toward key elements in an experience of place that obscures neither our embeddedness in place and the nature of that embeddedness nor the character of place as such.

Moreover, that we should look for a more concrete solution to the problems of technological modernity, while unsurprising, is also mistaken. Our contemporary situation is not the result of a process over which we, either collectively or individually, have mastery. Indeed, the desire for mastery and the appearance of the entire world as potentially subject to control is itself an integral element in the particular formation of the world that is technological modernity. The relinquishing of the desire for control and the recognition of the extent to which all-encompassing solutions are beyond us will be key elements in that "other beginning" that might presage the shift to a truly "post-modern," "post-technological" world.

The later Heidegger's apparently weary insistence on the limits in our ability to change the world's course should not be construed as a failure of vision or some lapse into quietistic resignation. It follows directly from a recognition of the essentially placed character of human being and the limitation and fragility following inevitably from it.

If it were possible to reconfigure our current forms of social and political organisation around a recognition of such placedness, then we would have a solution to many of our contemporary ills. Yet there is no concrete way in which such a wholesale reconfiguration can be brought away in a directed and purposive manner.

What we can do is work, as Heidegger suggests, in the many small ways that are available to us, to reorient ourselves to our actual situation and to the proper place in which find ourselves. Beyond

this, however, there is no “saving power” that we ourselves can exercise.

Heidegger's Topology attempts to provide an account of the way in which place provides a starting point for Heidegger's thinking as well as an idea toward which it develops. Indeed, it is only in the very late thinking, from perhaps 1947 onward, that Heidegger's topology emerges in a fully developed form (although a form that can only be appreciated when viewed in terms of the problems in the earlier thinking to which it is also a response).

If we are to take Heidegger as making a significant contribution to the philosophical analysis of place in the 20th century, then it must be primarily on the basis of the later thinking rather than the earlier. But the later thinking also makes demands on the reader that are much greater than those of the earlier work—demands that follow, in part, from Heidegger's own attempts to think topologically—and as a result the later thinking is more prone to being misread and misconstrued.

I had hoped that *Heidegger's Topology* would go some way toward correcting this tendency, but if Relph's comments are taken as an indication, the work would seem to have fallen short of at least one of its objectives. On the other hand, if the sort of topology or topography in which I take Heidegger to have been engaged and to which I take my own work to be a contribution does constitute a different, if not entirely unprecedented, mode of thinking, then perhaps one simply has to accept certain inevitable difficulties in the communication and elucidation of that thinking.

Heidegger's Topology does not, however, stand alone. Not only does it seem to me to be supported by the work of others in the same field, most notably, by that of Ed Casey, but it should also be read against the background of my other work. In this respect, *Heidegger's Topology* is only the second book in what should be a sequence of works that will together, I hope, provide a more fully elaborated account of the philosophical topology that is adumbrated in Heidegger.

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Building & Dwelling

To spare and preserve is to “let be,” but not through a withdrawal so much as a certain mode of engagement, and in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” the manner in which human beings are engaged with things and in the world is through that by which the idea of dwelling is itself introduced, namely, “building.”

Building is the activity that produces, that brings things forth, either through cultivation or through construction. . . . All human being involves building, and so stands in an important relation to the Greek “*technē*,” itself understood by Heidegger in terms of the disclosing or “letting-appear” that lies behind our word “technology.”

Yet the productive activity of building is not simply identical with technology, with any technique, nor with any technical enterprise such as architecture or engineering. Building is that mode of productive activity that articulates the world in a way that allows for human dwelling.

But this means that building must be understood as arising on the basis of dwelling rather than being that on which dwelling is itself based. Thus Heidegger writes that “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.” Building is the productive activity through which human beings make a place for themselves in the world and so by means of which their own dwelling is articulated. . . .

The building that is undertaken on the basis of our proper dwelling is a building that allows for such dwelling and so allows for the gathering of the fourfold—it is a building that itself spares and preserves through allowing human beings to engage with things in a way that reflects the unitary and differing character of things. True building produces things that allow the world and the things that make up the world to come forth in their abundance and multiplicity—true building produces, as it also works in relation to, “things”; true building makes for, as it also arises in, places (*Heidegger's Topology*, p. 271).

Letter from Far South

John Cameron

Recently retired from academia, Cameron is an Honorary Associate of the Place Research Network in the School of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. In sending this piece, he explains: “I’m setting out to write an occasional letter from our place on Bruny Island, just off the southeastern coast of Tasmania, the island state to the south of mainland Australia. I hope to reflect upon some of our experiences of place making and the relationships we have developed, the complexities of seeking to live more lightly on the land, responsive to the richness of the ‘more-than-human world’ in which we find ourselves immersed. Much of my thinking in this letter has been enriched by the writings of David Abram, Henry Bortoft, Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas, Edward Relph, David Seamon, as well as many others.” jcameronvking@optusnet.com.au. © 2008 John Cameron.

A pair of herons reside very close to our house. They are nesting now, and I am often stopped in my tracks in the early morning by the sound of their strangely guttural mating cries or the sight of their slow lolloping wing beat in unison as they fly by, one of them often carrying a dry branch in his or her beak. The White-faced Herons (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) stand over two feet tall, pale misty grey in color with yellow legs and rounded white face that seems to emphasize their delicacy and alertness.

My partner Vicki has painted several watercolors of the heron, bringing patient observation and decades of painting experience to her deceptively simple and evocative depictions. She has also been working in a completely new medium for her—assembling pieces of driftwood to convey the essence of each of the shorebirds we encounter.

When we climb down to the rocky beach immediately below us, we pick our way through the morning’s offering from the sea—strands of seaweed, fragments of whelk, cowrie and oyster shell, plastic drink bottles, and driftwood pieces suggestive of bird necks, beaks, or bodies. We always have avian company—kelp gulls wailing and mewing; a tern dipping its wing slightly before plummeting into the water to dive for a fish; a pied cormorant, part fish, part bird, part snake, slipping below the water, then surfacing and slapping the water vigorously with its wings to gain purchase for takeoff when fully laden with fish.

When we have gathered a good supply of the morning’s treasures, we carry them up to Vicki’s shed where a profusion of shapes are in all stages of being transformed from wood to bird. She has placed a

delicate elongated driftwood heron in our kitchen window facing the water, opposite the wall on which hangs one of her watercolor herons.

One recent morning, gazing out that window, I saw the heron with its rounded white face motionless at the edge of the water amid the grey ellipses of rock in the mist. Its presence in living, sculpted, painted form brought forth several memories. One day we were watching the heron alight onto a large horizontal dead branch overlooking the shore. It perched, looking out over the water as intently as we were looking at it. My focus shifted from the heron to the branch, and I was startled to see how closely the end of the branch mirrored the shape of the bird. The angles between thrust forward head, sinuous neck, and spindly legs were the same. The tree ceased being a eucalypt of undistinguished shape and became the “heron tree.” Here was the very correspondence between wood and live bird that Vicki was creating with her sculptures.

The second memory was of the role that the heron played in our finding this place initially. We were relaxing with our friends Pete Hay and his wife Anna at their weekend place on Bruny Island after the successful conclusion of a “Sense of Place” colloquium in southern Tasmania. On our last morning, when we were due to fly back home to Sydney, Pete, a colloquium co-organizer and a passionate poet and place writer, suggested a pre-breakfast boating excursion, to which I readily agreed.

For no particular reason, we turned southward rather than northward as on our previous outings.

Pete was in front in the rowboat with his two dogs alert in the prow, and we paddled behind in the canoe, enjoying the still waters of the estuary for the last time. He'd spied a white-faced heron by the shore and rowed closer in the hopes of photographing it. The bird did not oblige and each time flew a little further on just as Pete prepared to photograph it.

By the time we rounded yet another rocky promontory in our canoe, Vicki and I had grown concerned at how far we'd come and how long this expedition was taking, given how much time was needed to catch the Bruny ferry to the Tasmanian mainland and be at the airport by early afternoon.

Just past the headland, the wide veranda of a simple house appeared in view, splendidly located on its own, overlooking the wooded coastal shore. Vicki exclaimed that she wanted it, or to be precise, "Wanna wanna wanna," something I'd never heard her say before. I commented that the current owner would probably have an opinion on that statement. A few more strokes of the paddle brought us in sight of a "For Sale" sign on the shore. We were stunned.

After failing to rouse anyone by calling out, we diverted Pete from his pursuit of the heron and persuaded him to hurry back to the shack so we could make inquiries. With a half hour to spare, we met with the owner on site, had a quick tour of the small and largely unfinished house, and essentially shook hands on the sale of the place.

As for Vicki's uncharacteristic utterance, we were humbled to later discover that the name the original Nuenonne Aboriginal inhabitants gave to Bruny Island was "Lunawanna-alonnah." She had voiced something of an echo of the Aboriginal name for the island, and we subsequently learned that our new home had been the site of significant early contact between the Nuenonne and representatives of the first Governor with ultimately tragic consequences when they were moved off the island.

Vicki had just finished her doctoral thesis exploring the experience of being-in-place, displacement, trauma, and the ethics of perception based in part on time she spent at the Aboriginal outstation of Utopia in the Northern Territory with Anmatyerr and Alyawarr Aboriginal women artists. Our relationship with Aboriginal people, their trauma and displacement, had just taken a new turn in an uncanny way.

There are several ways to view what happened that day. From one viewpoint, the heron was simply doing what herons do, keeping its distance and moving on as Pete got too close in his rowboat. At the same time, we have said on more than one occasion that "heron" helped bring us here because we would never have ventured so far otherwise, and that the place called to us that morning.

These are not glib lines. They are full of meaning that deepens with experience. Both views make sense to me despite their seemingly contradictory nature. Holding attitudes and experiences that are at odds with each other appears to be part of living here. It provides a creative tension—an impetus to think through questions of how the heron might somehow be an agent in the mysterious process of our unexpectedly moving here, or how meaningful it is to talk of intentionality in the more-than-human world.

It is a matter of the heart as well as thought to pay attention to the feeling of affinity that sometimes rises in me when heron appears. Even the attitude that heron was only instinctively avoiding human contact comes from a feeling of respect, of valuing its otherness, and not wanting to reduce it to merely a figure in a human drama of my creation.

I don't want to make more of the event than is warranted, especially when there are so many practical environmental problems to deal with in our locality that need my attention. I hope to mull over such issues in future letters, but for the moment saying that heron guided us here seems to be a way of expressing a feeling that something larger than my own conceptual mind or mere accident is at play.

Without consciously intending to, we have provided ourselves with the opportunity to put more fully into practice what we had been teaching in "Sense of Place" classes at the University of Western Sydney. Ecological sustainability, an essential aspect of inhabiting place, is more of an everyday matter here because we are not connected to power, water, or sewage. We generate our greatly reduced electricity needs with solar panels and a wind turbine and rely on rainwater tanks and a dry composting toilet.

Since we moved here full-time two years ago, we have embarked on a land regeneration project on our 55 acres of overgrazed paddocks—we've removed the sheep and have planted 1200 native trees grown

from local seed and 1000 native grasses for land regeneration, wildlife habitat, and erosion control.

Experientially, because we are on the island for about ten days at a time between trips to mainland Tasmania for provisions (there are no shops on north Bruny Island) and don't watch television, we have a far more intense and ongoing experience of this one place. With no neighbors in view and facing an expanse of estuarine shores and waters, we focus much attention on the more-than-human world that we are inhabiting and our response to it.

Living here is also precipitating changes in the “practices of place” that I have developed and written about previously: Goethean science, meditation, bush regeneration, and investigation of local natural and human history. I had expected in my “retirement” I would be able to implement this work more thoroughly and systematically, but life has proved otherwise. Much of my day is now spent outside spraying thistles in the paddocks, planting trees and grasses, maintaining the tree guards, digging in the vegetable bed and so on, whereas nearly all my working days at the university were spent inside at the computer screen, in classrooms, or at meetings.

The rare occasions when I have ventured down to the shore to undertake some Goethean science, for example, have been rewarding enough but no longer seem sufficient in themselves, perhaps because the context within which I am carrying them out has changed so radically. Rather, they are pointing toward a more flexible and integrated way of being outdoors here, enabling me to move in and out of task-oriented action, sensuous appreciation, and intuitive or meditative states, without allocating certain periods of time for each.

I say “pointing the way toward,” because for much of the time, the directed activities tend to overwhelm other sensibilities that emerge only as an occasional glimpse. Even though progress is slow, it has increasingly felt contrary to the spirit of these practices, as well as being impractical, to schedule them into a part of the day.

I felt surrounded that morning by the many manifestations of heron in front of me. Heron wasn't simply “out there” in all its forms, manifesting what I could best describe as poised attentiveness. The feel-

ing was also a personal matter. My everyday personality is not characterized by either poise or attentiveness, yet these are qualities that attract me and to which I aspire.

The possibility of bringing them more to life within has opened up, but it is a razor-edged possibility. On the one side, there are days when it seems that all I can see in the mirror of nature here are my own shortcomings—mental turbulence in the face of the reflective waters, resistance to change in the midst of the continuous flux of wind and waves.

On the other side is the danger of constructing a narrative that obscures as much as it reveals, of telling a simple storyline that belies the complex, contradictory, and erratic nature of what I'm experiencing or makes too much of what is happening. The middle way between self-doubting and self-deluding stories seems to involve holding such stories lightly, having an attitude of quiet, open-hearted acceptance of what is—including my own human foolishness—and care for ourselves as integral parts of this place.

As I write this, I am also very aware of the precariousness of the situation we all face. There are many threats, such as tree dieback, erosion, and introduced weeds, to this narrow fringe of coastal woodland, and our capacity to keep living here can be so easily broken by illness or misadventure.

Yet, heron nests are being built, the recently planted trees are putting down roots, as are we, so there is hope for the new season. I sense that we are participating—heron, Vicki and I—in an unfolding relationship that has many dimensions.

We are becoming familiar with each other's habits. Our feeling for heron grows as the story of our being here develops. We are working physically to create more habitat for birds. We move quietly to respect everyone's space as much as we can, and some of our avian friends are approaching us more closely these days. Vicki's creative response to the presence of heron and the other birds is flourishing.

My wonderment and appreciation of the whole process grows as I write my way into it. Writing, too, is one of the ways in which I am participating in this three-way connection. It is helping to illuminate the depth of the relationships, how to hold lightly the complexity of living here and to accept it with an attentive heart.